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Car spaces fill amid claims centre is 'like free park-and-ride'

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CRAMMED IN AT GATEWAY

OVERCROWDING at Banbury's Gateway Centre car park is being examined by centre bosses after criticisms from shoppers.

Customers flocked to the opening of the centre's new Primark store last Wednesday, but many of those eager to grab an early bargain were left disappointed after not finding room in the new car park.

Shoppers took to Facebook to complain, with many claiming that town centre employees were abusing the car park as a "free park-and-ride."

But Gateway centre spokeswoman Jo Francis said they would be looking at a range of options to tackle the problem, including encouraging more public transport use.

Banbury resident Peter Jones visited the centre, in Acorn Way, on Wednesday morning, to try the new Primark, but after being unable to find a space he went to Warwick to shop instead.

He said: "I've been to the centre two or three times and it does seem like a bit of bad timing; just the novelty of the stores opening."

"I thought at first that it might be a clever idea to have free car parking, so people can use the bus into the centre, but instead it's going to be very difficult to monitor."

Mr Jones added that, despite the parking problems, new shops like the flagship 80,000 sq ft Marks & Spencer store had been very popular with customers.

Kieran Davey
kdaley@nqo.com



A similar scene on Thursday last week

Gateway Shopping Park with new stores opening each week, we are actively reviewing our car park strategy for the benefit of our retailers and customers.

"We are already in discussion with local transport providers to see how we can encourage greater use of public transport and we will also be looking at opportunities, such as car sharing and how to maximise the space."

It is understood centre bosses are considering options including "traffic flow", use of public transport and "environmental" schemes.

Banbury Town Council leader Gordon Ross, who opened the Primark store, said he would raise the issue of overcrowding.

He said: "When I was there, I could see what the problem was. My children visited me and could not find a car parking space for the new Primark, so they had to find somewhere to park on the estates instead, which is obviously a problem."

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Police appeal after cyclist is struck by truck

POLICE are appealing for information about the circumstances surrounding how a cyclist was struck by a truck and killed in Banbury.

Kit Pentlow was knocked from his bike by a blue Scania HGV at the A422 Hennef Way roundabout with Ermont Way at about 12.43pm on Wednesday November 4.

Police confirmed that the 20-year-old, of Alma Road, Banbury, died at the scene.

Detective Sergeant Gavin Collier, from the Joint Operations Unit for Roads Policing, is appealing for witnesses who saw the collision to contact the police.

He said: "I would still like to speak to anyone who witnessed the collision or saw either the cyclist or the heavy goods vehicle travelling prior to the collision and has not already spoken to police."

An inquest on Mr Pentlow, which opened at Oxfordshire Coroner's Court last Tuesday, was told a post-mortem examination had revealed he had died of severe head injuries. Oxford coroner Darren Salter adjourned the inquest until April 21.

Witnesses can call police on 101, quoting URN 563 4/11.

Suspect bailed

A MAN arrested after a boy was allegedly sexually assaulted at Cherwell Services on M40 has been rebailed by police.

The 21-year-old was arrested after the incident on August 23, when a 10-year-old boy was touched over his clothing by a man in the toilets at the services.

The man, from Wetherby in West Yorkshire, has been rebailed until Tuesday, December 15.

Students give modern twist to classic tale with Christmas at the Darling household



Sam Deeley as Hook, left, and some of the pirates in Bloxham School's production of Peter Pan-inspired Lost Boys, which was staged last week

STUDENTS at Bloxham School have staged a run of *Lost Boys*, an original play inspired by *Peter Pan*.

They worked with children's author Sam Gayton and Sam Brassington, the school's director of drama, as well as the rest of the theatre department to write an original script over the summer.

In this modern twist on the classic

children's story, it is Christmas Eve at the Darling residence and nothing is going to plan.

The children will not go to sleep. Nana the dog refuses to stop barking and Mrs Darling will not ease off on the sherry.

Daughter Wendy feels like she is the only one holding the family together. But it is hard work keeping the

people you love from flying apart, especially when you are tired of serving vol-aux-vents and then Peter Pan invites you to Neverland to join the Lost Boys.

Sarah Warren, Bloxham School's marketing and communications officer, said: "A hundred members of the student body were involved, either in the front of house, in the

play or doing the lighting. "This is a quarter of them, so it is a big deal for the school.

"It looks amazing. The outfits they've got and the staging they've put together is brilliant."

Lost Boys began its three-day run at the school last Thursday, with a final performance on Saturday evening.

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Police's crackdown on Christmas crime

Week launched to give the public advice on how they can reduce the risks of burglary

Naomi Herring
nherring@nqo.com

A WEEK of autumn crime prevention action is under way across the Cherwell district, as the neighbourhood police team carried out its anti-burglary campaign.

Payment issues occur after move of council's back office services

PAYMENTS to staff and businesses have been delayed, duplicated and incomplete since the back-of-fice services of Oxfordshire County Council moved to

The crime prevention drive started on Monday, with the aim of helping to inform households how they can stop burglaries in the run-up to Christmas.

It comes as the latest statistics showed that the number of house break-ins within Cherwell at this time of year had fallen slightly in 2015, from 111 in 2014 to 103.

Thames Valley Police Detective Sergeant Jade Hewitt, of the CID, based at Banbury police station, said: "We can only achieve this type of reduction with



the continued support of the public.

"We want to encourage people to use timer lights, remember not to put Christmas gifts on display and always ensure your house is secure."

"If you want any more advice please come and see the

neighbourhood team at the crime prevention stands."

The campaign involves talking to residents and answering questions on protecting properties as the nights are getting darker.

A crime prevention stand was set up in Banbury town centre, outside HMV, on Saturday.

Others were operating in Bicester town centre's Sheep Street on Monday, and at the Orchard Way shops in Banbury on Tuesday.

The team can be followed on twitter @tvp_banbury.

but that the scheme was "on a positive trajectory".

Duplicate payments had also been made to suppliers, but the council is not yet sure of the total overpaid.



Union secretary Gavin Bashford, below, says attacks are putting people off applying to be paramedics

Patient attacks on paramedics put lives at risk

Incidents have put people off joining service adding to staff shortage problem

Luke Sproule
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PATIENTS' lives could have been endangered after paramedics were attacked 40 times in Oxfordshire in the past four years, a union has warned.

South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) Unison branch secretary Gavin Bashford said assaults on staff, which have been condemned by the service and by MPs, could lead to two ambulances being taken off the road at the same time.

Mr Bashford also said the assaults were putting people off joining SCAS, with the organisation already short of staff.

Figures obtained by the *Banbury Cake*, using the Freedom of Information Act, also revealed 45 addresses in the county have been given a marker telling ambulance staff they should consider attending only if accompanied by police or social workers due to previous incidents.

Mr Bashford warned this could put seriously ill people at risk.

He said: "Any assault would take the ambulance off the road for a while whilst welfare checks are done."

"Also the team leader, who will be either in an ambulance or a fast response car, has to go and check the paramedic for welfare.

"It is absolutely a matter of life



Gavin Bashford, of union Unison

and death for a patient further down the line.

"We struggle to meet our performance targets and if you have a paramedic attacked you lose that crew and team leader and suddenly you have two ambulances off the road.

"The outcome can be poor for other patients."

Last month, it was revealed SCAS was struggling to fill 300 paramedic vacancies as well as 150 other frontline staff and had resorted to recruiting in Poland and Australia as well as the UK.

The ambulance service said this staff shortage was the main reason for paramedics failing to reach patients with life threatening illnesses within eight minutes in more than a quarter of cases in June, July and August.

Mr Bashford said: "Assaults are shocking for us and also for our patients.

"It is added stress to what is already a very stressful job.

"We have a big recruitment

issue and this is an added problem."

Of the 40 assaults 22 were reported to the police and paramedics suffered attacks including being punched, scratched, spat on and verbally abused.

Addresses with 'red flags' are located across the county, with 23 in Oxford, six in Banbury, three in Abingdon and three in Bicester, as well as in a number of other towns and villages.

The SCAS head of risk and security, John Dunn, said: "Any incidents of assaults towards staff are completely unacceptable.

"We encourage staff to report all assaults that arise from their work using our incident reporting system.

"We also encourage staff to report the incident to the police."

The figures on assaults came days after mental health charity Mind marked National Stress Awareness Day on November 4 by emphasising the pressure emergency service staff are under and the impact it can have on their mental health.

Oxfordshire Mind spokeswoman Beth McAllister said: "We know that emergency service personnel are more likely to experience a mental health problem than the general workforce due to the nature of the work, and they are also less likely to seek support.

"At Oxfordshire Mind, we'd encourage anyone who has been through such an experience to seek support and to look after your mental wellbeing."

Children's centres facing axe as protection need up

AN UNPRECEDENTED number of youngsters requiring protection from abuse and neglect has left no choice but to cut funding for children's centres, county council bosses claim.

Jim Leivers, director of children's services, said 634 youngsters were now on child protection plans - 'more than ever before'.

Since 2010 there has also been a 63 per cent increase in statutory child protection investigations - made when a child is considered to be at risk of 'significant harm' - compared with 23 per cent nationally.

According to a report this month, the rapid increase is because of greater public awareness



Jim Leivers, the director of children's services

of abuse after high-profile child sexual exploitation cases, such as Operation Bullfinch in Oxford, and closer working between county authorities.

But Mr Leivers said the growing demand and 'eye-watering' budget cuts meant there was now 'no financial

alternative' to axing universal services if it was not legally required to provide.

This includes Oxfordshire's 44 children's centres and seven early intervention hubs, which the Conservative-run authority has proposed replacing with eight 'children and family resource centres' targeted at the most vulnerable people aged up to 19. It would save £8m.

At a question-and-answer event about the plans last Wednesday night, Mr Leivers told parents: 'I know of no councillors who want to close centres.'

"The big issue we have got is dealing with children who are abused and need to be cared for. We have a set of duties we can't meet with the resources we have."

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Contest gives new life to tops of Christmas past

Charity launches its festive competition to highlight the benefits of upcycling

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kdavey@nqo.com

A CHARITY is inviting Banbury people to revive their old Christmas jumpers by decorating them for a chance to win prizes.

The 12 Jumpers of Christmas competition, run by environmental charity WRAP, encourages people to save money on clothes and reduce their carbon footprint.

Participants need to either decorate a jumper or cardigan they already have, or one bought from a charity shop so it can be worn instead of buying a new jumper.

Both adults and children can enter the competition – part of the charity's Love Your Clothes campaign – and jumpers must feature a creative Christmas theme.

WRAP head of clothing Sarah Clayton said: "We are really excited to be launching our 12 Jumpers of Christmas competition and hope it will inspire lots of people to get upcycling."

"With most Christmas jumpers being worn only a handful of times over the festive season,



transforming an existing jumper into a one-off festive masterpiece is a great way of adding some 'green' style to your wardrobe, and saving some cash."

According to research from WRAP, 40 per cent of Christmas jumper owners expect to wear them just once or twice this year.

Designs will be judged based on creativity, the inspiration for the jumper and the materials used, with extra points for using recycled materials. The charity will publish the 12 best designs on their website, with the winner receiving a Janome sewing machine.

Entrants should submit a good

quality colour photograph of their jumper, with a description of what inspired the design, how it was made and what materials were used.

Details should be sent to loveyourclothes@wrap.org.uk with the subject "12 Jumpers of Christmas" by 10am on December 7.

Cloudy2Clear Windows – Service With A Smile!

It's been a crazy few months for Cloudy2Clear Windows. The company which specialises in repairing windows which are steamed up, broken or damaged by replacing the panes – not the frames has grown rapidly as homeowners take advantage of their services.

Managing Director James Miller feels that it's all about service. 'Our product is simple. If your double glazing is misted up we can replace the glass at a fraction of the cost of a new window, in any type of frame, and with a new 10 year guarantee. But it's not just about saving people money, although

that obviously helps. Many tradespeople have struggled since last year and I honestly feel that during the good times a minority perhaps didn't focus on customer care as much as they should have done. We make sure we turn up when we say we will, do the job the customer requires and leave their house as clean as a whistle. I often get comments back from customers on how they really didn't expect that sort of service which, in a way, is very sad for the service industry as a whole.'

Cloudy2Clear service the Oxford, Banbury & Abingdon areas and James is finding that his approach is a major factor

in his success. 'The truth is that it's not just the personal satisfaction that I get from doing a good job but also it makes good business sense. I get a huge amount of business from friends and family of people I've done work for,

which just goes to show how much a little bit of effort is appreciated.' So, if your windows are steamed up, broken or damaged give James a call for a free quotation on 0800 61 21 118 and he'll be happy to help!



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Waitrose told to find a more suitable location

Objections raised to the site of new supermarket as councillors due to make a decision today

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A NEW Waitrose proposed for Banbury, due to be decided on today, should find a new location, it has been warned.

Plans to build the store on land in Southam Road has been met by several objections, including from the town council.

Whether to grant permission for the store, due to have a 220-space car park, will be decided by Cherwell district councillors at a planning meeting today at 4pm at Bodicote House. The application has been put forward by Barwood Capital and Mondelez International.

The development is also expected to create 200 full and part-time jobs.

Among objectors are the Banbury Civic Society, which said the location was wrong.

In its response to the application, the society said: "We understand that there is enthusiasm for having a Waitrose in Banbury, both for the goods it offers and for its potential to attract shoppers to the town.

"This is the wrong site however.

"The Southam Road is already notoriously congested, whilst the Southam Road is also too far from the town centre for there to be any possibility of the new store generating significant additional town-centre footfall."

Banbury Town Council agreed that Southam Road was the wrong location and said: "The town council is concerned that the proposed location of the site will have an adverse impact on the vitality of the town centre."

It also felt that surrounding alternative sites, such as Castle Quay 2, Calthorpe Centre and the Spiceball site, were not "adequately dealt with".

But residents have spoken in favour of the development. One response said: "The store would provide good



Banbury store manager John Farrell, deputy mayor Gordon Ross and Primark employee Brittany Almond

Fashion shop chain latest to move into Gateway home

SHOPPERS flocked to the opening of the county's newest Primark.

Customers queued early to try the clothing chain's branch at Banbury's Gateway shopping centre, opened by town council deputy mayor Gordon Ross.

Mollington resident Jane Paynton, one of the first to enter, said: "It's nice to have one of these shops in the area. It means I don't have to travel to Milton Keynes or somewhere else." The store will replace one in

Oxford's Westgate Centre, which will close in March, for building work. Staff have been offered jobs at Banbury.

Fat Face opened on Saturday and Ed's Easy Diner is also due to open this month.

employment to 200 local people and would encourage shoppers to visit the area. Banbury needs it."

In a letter addressing alternative sites, agent Peter Frampton said: "Waitrose considered the options but, in its opinion, none of these would deliver a successful store or achieve the desired return on investment.

"It is apparent to Waitrose that whilst some requirements could be met on the Spiceball site, meeting any one of those requirements would result in unacceptable compromises on the others."



This new Waitrose supermarket was officially opened last month in Botley Road, Oxford

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Troubled schoolgirl who hanged herself sent text requests

PARENTS of a 15-year-old, who hanged herself in a wood near her home in Chadlington, say it was a call for help after problems at school.

Jenny Fry was found dead by her mother, Debra, on June 11.

In a note, the Chipping Norton School pupil, of Stonelee Close, described her life as "insignificant". The family said her death followed a difficult time at school and claimed this was due to poor health, caused by a condition called electro-hypersensitivity (EHS).

They said wireless technology made her tired and unable to concentrate, which resulted in detentions at school.

Ms Fry told Oxford Coroners' Court: "I do not think she intended to kill herself. I think she was utterly frustrated from school. I feel Jenny was making a stand for her generation and sent the message to a friend to find her or alert police.

"I think she wanted things sorted. If she intended to take her own life I do not think she would have sent the two messages. Unfortunately, her friend did not have her phone that day."

Coroner Darren Salter, in a narrative verdict, said he was unable to rule out the possibility it has been a cry for help. He did not include factors relating to EHS, as there were no medical notes to conclude she had it.

The inquest heard Jenny left for school on the morning of June 11, but did not get on her bus.

Police said she sent texts to her friend at 9.36am and 10.05am. Alerted that Jenny was not in school, Ms Fry went looking and found her at 4.20pm.

A suicide note was found with her and on her laptop. It read: "I find it hard to be hopeful when I can hardly enjoy anything any more."



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It's all systems ho-ho-go!

X Factor star to join Santa and the residents of Banbury for Christmas lights launch party

Naomi Herring
nherring@nqo.com

FLICKERING lights, Father Christmas and fireworks will provide the perfect back drop for *X Factor* winner Sam Bailey to turn on Banbury's Christmas lights on Sunday.

The singer, who won over viewers in the ITV talent show in 2013, will perform ahead of the big switch-on outside Banbury Town Hall.

A host of dance, music and entertainment will fill a three-hour programme before the firework finale to set off the festive season in style.

Chairman of Banbury Town Council general services committee councillor Colin Clarke said the council moved from the previous years of having soap stars light up the town and instead opted for a singing star.

He said: "This year Banbury will continue its tradition of providing the best Christmas lights switch-on for miles around."

Entertainment on stage starts at 2pm and will include dance and music acts such as Beyoncé tribute act Victoria, Banbury's rock choir and local band The Next Hot Thing.

Mrs Bailey is expected on stage at about 4.20pm, when she will perform six songs before lighting up the streets at 5pm. She will also sign autographs and snap a selfie with fans.

A special guest with a big red suit and



Actor Chris Gascoyne turns on the 2014 lights; this year's star, Sam Bailey, right

fluffy white beard will also pop by to give children a wave from the Town Hall balcony.

The programme includes fairground rides and festive foods before a festive firework finale will seal off the night taking Banbury town centre into the Christmas countdown with a bang.

The night has been organised by

Banbury Town Council, with help from the main sponsor, the Castle Quay Shopping Centre.

Last year, thousands of people turned out to see *Coronation Street*'s Peter Barlow, actor Chris Gascoyne, switch on the Christmas lights and start the countdown to Christmas in the town.



£1,500 raised

BANBURY: Fancy dress, cupcakes and Pudsey ears played a part in a building society's efforts in raising £1,500 for Children in Need.

The Banbury branch of the Leeds, in High Street, hosted a dress down day, with some staff choosing to wear fancy dress.

Manager Claire Hill said: "We also put lots of coloured circles in the window to draw attention to the branch."

"It is a fantastic feeling to know we are helping ensure the safe and happy upbringing of children in Banbury and across the UK."

No changes

BANBURY: Campaigners have welcomed a pledge by hospitals bosses not to change services at the Horton General without a public consultation.

Keep the Horton General chairman Keith Strangwood met managers, including Oxford University Hospitals Foundation Trust's chief executive Dr Bruno Holthof, to discuss the future.

Mr Strangwood said: "The assurance is a marked improvement on what has previously occurred."

Bins discount

CHERWELL: Discounted bins can be bought from Cherwell District Council until Christmas.

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Racer Alfie Briggs, seven, at home seated in his Synergy 50cc kart, with his collection of racing trophies

Boy hopes to win young racer title

Primary lad began karting two years ago after going to a race with his parents

Sophie Grubb
sgrubb@nqo.com

SEVEN-year-old petrol head Alfie Briggs feels nowhere more at home than sitting in his Synergy 50cc kart dwarfed by his impressive collection of racing trophies.

The youngster, of Banbury, now hopes to win another accolade - Downforce Radio's Under 13 Racer of the Year award.

Alfie is nominated in the national competition along with nine other children who share

his need for speed.

He has just come third in the MSA British Bambino Championships.

Alfie, who goes to Middleton Cheney Primary School, first got into motor sports at age five, after watching a race at a kart track with his parents.

He asked if he could have a go and practised enthusiastically until he was six, the minimum age for competitive karting.

Mum Emma Briggs and her husband, Steve, who has a motorsport team in Oxford, said they were very proud of their son.

Mrs Briggs said: "In his first year he was winning championships up until the summer when he had an accident and his car flipped over."

"He's done it twice since. It worries us when you see the team's boss with his helmet in his hands and Alfie upside down, but it's what he wants to do."

Alfie took a short pit stop from competing after his accident, but not for long.

Mrs Briggs said: "He was asked to test drive a kart and he was given it to drive for the rest of the year. He's not been off the podium since."

"We need people to vote for Alfie - it would be fab to get Banbury behind him."

Alfie said: "I love the speed and I love overtaking. I like to make my family proud."

Supporters can vote for him online until December 3, by going to downforce-radio.co.uk.

Teenage triathlete's Olympian dream gets backing of company

A TEENAGE Banbury triathlete has been given an aerodynamic carbon-fibre racing bike by a local firm to help him train for the Olympics.

Reuben Trotter, 14, who races for Banbury-based Team Cherwell Triathlon Club, was gifted the Air 9.2 Boardman bike by Brackley-based engineering firm KW Special Projects.

Reuben, who was inspired to take up triathlon after watching the Brownlee brothers' victory at the London Olympics, said his bike had improved his cycling.

He said: "I've always been a strong runner and swimmer, but this year for the first time my cycling has become the strongest element in my triathlons and this must be as a result of my new Boardman bike."

In the first week he trained

on the bike he said he shaved 90 seconds off his previous time on a 10-mile trial.

Kieron Salter, managing director of KWSP, added: "As a high performance engineering company that has worked with leading names in motorsport and high performance sport engineering, it was natural for us to take an interest in a local athlete who is showing huge potential."

"We've been delighted to have helped to make a difference to Reuben's performance with the support and kind generosity of Boardman with whom we are also working on some exciting projects soon to be announced."

"We wish Reuben the very best of luck as he continues to compete. We look forward to seeing him take an Olympic podium in the future, knowing that we had a part."



Triathlete Reuben Trotter, 14, in action

GIVE VIEWS ON CROSSING

BODICOTE: People can have a say on plans for a new puffin crossing on the village's main road until December 11.

The county council has proposed one as part of improvements to pedestrian access on the A4260 Oxford Road.

It would be 35 metres north-west of the junction with Broad Gap. To comment, go to consultations.oxfordshire.gov.uk.

WORKERS CALL OFF STRIKE

BANBURY: More than 200 workers at delivery service DHL have called off strike plans after a new pay deal.

The GMB union had been due to take action at three warehouses on the Cherwell Campus. Organiser David Day said staff voted to accept 3.5 per cent, plus a 27p an hour rise on all base rates, taking the hourly rate from £8.43 to £9.

FESTIVE CRAFTS WORKSHOP

MIDDLETON CHENEY: A Christmas arts and crafts workshop will take place at the village library this weekend.

The activities, for adults and children, will include making paper lanterns, angels, and cards. Workshops are on Saturday, from 11am to 1.30pm, and Sunday, from 1pm to 3.30pm. Sessions cost £3 for adults, £1.50 for children.

FIREWORKS WARNING

BANBURY: People with pets are being warned to take care when the town's festive fireworks display blasts off on Sunday, November 29.

The display, in Bridge Street Park, is the finale to this year's Christmas lights switch-on at 5pm.

The fireworks are expected to last for about three minutes.

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Crushing story of romance

CAROL (15, 119 mins) A romance/drama, with Rooney Mara, Cate Blanchett and Kyle Chandler. Director: Todd Haynes

LOVE tears good people apart in Todd Haynes's masterful period drama, based on the novel *The Price Of Salt* by Patricia Highsmith.

Elegantly adapted by Phyllis Nagy, *Carol* charts an unlikely romance between a shop girl and a glamorous housewife in early 1950s New York.

The impeccable style of the era conceals a maelstrom of messy, raw emotion, which overflows in the heartbreaking second act as forbidden lovers discover the cost of their liaisons.

In a year blessed with extraordinary performances from actresses, this boasts the mesmerizing on-screen pairing of Rooney Mara and Cate Blanchett as independent women from opposite sides of the social divide.

They are both exquisite, exposing the chinks in their characters' brittle armour as giddiness turns to despair in the cold light of day.

Every line of dialogue is beautifully tailored, complemented by gorgeous costumes and production design that capture the restrictive social mores of a time when every conversation was conducted beneath gently entwining tendrils of smoke.

As a bond between the women deepens, kindling a passionate affair, Carol's estranged husband seeks sole custody of their daughter. Her best friend is then dragged into the acrimonious legal battle.

Director Haynes is no stranger to the era, having considered matters of class and sexual orientation in suburban 1950s Connecticut in the Oscar-nominated drama, *Far From Heaven*.

He is equally accomplished here, rendering the emotional devastation in meticulous, controlled brushstrokes.

We are left spellbound.

BRIDGE OF SPIES (12A, 141 mins) A war thriller with Tom Hanks, Mark Rylance and Alan Alda

Director: Steven Spielberg

DIRECTOR Steven Spielberg reunites with actor Tom Hanks for an incredible true story of courage and daring.

Bridge Of Spies is an espionage thriller that pits a mild-mannered insurance lawyer against the USSR and Germany during the Cold War.

Spielberg elicits another compelling performance from Hanks, as an underdog, whose innate decency inspires everyone around him.

However, Mark Rylance lingers even longer in the memory as the convicted Soviet collaborator, who confronts the harsh reality of his situation with droll humour.

Rudolf Abel (Rylance) is arrested in 1957 New York and labelled a Soviet spy.

Legal maven Thomas Watters Jr (Alan Alda) enlists one of his best lawyers, James B Donovan (Hanks), to mount a credible defence, even though the odds are stacked against a fair trial.

The presiding judge makes clear his expectations of Abel's fate: "He'll receive a capable defense and God willing, he'll be convicted."

Sure enough, Abel is convicted, but then a US pilot, is shot down over the Soviet Union.

Consequently, Donovan travels to Berlin to broker a covert exchange deal.

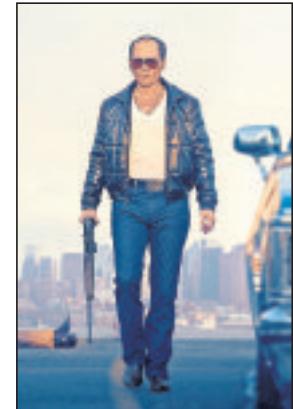
BLACK MASS (15, 123 mins) A thriller with Johnny Depp, Joel Edgerton and Benedict Cumberbatch. Director: Scott Cooper

CRIME might pay for Johnny Depp, who bids for a fourth Oscar nomination with a tour-de-force portrayal of real-life mobster James "Whitey" Bulger in Scott Cooper's crime thriller.

It's a chilling performance of brooding menace and the actor immerses himself in the role, with coloured contact lenses, re-



Cate Blanchett,
right, Johnny
Depp, top,
Tom Hanks and
Mark Rylance



ceding hairline and paunch.

Black Mass is a handsomely crafted tale of crime and punishment.

John Connolly (Joel Edgerton) grew up with the Bulgers in Boston and returns as an FBI agent.

The city is under the control of a gang led by Whitey, while his brother, Billy (Benedict Cumberbatch), wields power as a state senator.

When gangland rivals declare war, Connolly asks Whitey to turn informant. But this covert alliance is tested when Whitey murders an accomplice.

Edgerton pales next to Depp and Cumberbatch has limited screen time to add flesh to the bare bones of his power broker.

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Cake Bookworm

The Three-Year Swim Club: The Untold Story Of The Sugar Ditch Kids And Their Quest For Olympic Glory by Julie Checkoway, paperback by Little, Brown, £14.99 (ebook £8.99)

SOICHI Sakamoto was a man with a dream: to train underprivileged Maui kids into Olympic swimmers. This was the 1930s, when such visions were lofty. Sakamoto had no coaching experience – he couldn't even swim – and the irrigation ditches of Maui's sugar cane fields would double up as training pools. But none of that stopped the Three-Year Swim Club (3YSC) from eventually making a splash on the international scene. Their triumphs overcame far greater adversities than those early practicalities and this is what makes their story relevant beyond a pool of sports history fans. It's a beautifully narrated record of life at a time of racial prejudice, inequality and global conflict; an awe-inspiring reminder

of how shared dreams have the power to alter destinies and unite nations. A truly rewarding read.

Cockfosters: Stories by Helen Simpson, hardback by Constable, £15.99 (ebook £9.99)

THIS is the sixth collection from the highly acclaimed British short story writer, author of *Hey Yeah Right Get A Life* and *Constitutional*. Simpson's characters are ageing with each collection, and in *Cockfosters* we see them dealing with the challenges of middle age: menopause, empty nests, mouldering marriages and mortality. The stories are sad, tender and beautifully observed. In the title story, tube stations become mini-chapter headings as we follow a pair of old school friends as they chatter about getting older all the way up the Piccadilly Line, on the trail of a pair of lost varifocals. *Kythera*, meanwhile, is an unabashed hymn of love from a mother to her grown-up daughter,

structured around the recipe for a much-loved lemon drizzle cake. In *Cheapside*, a high-powered lawyer, on his second wife, tries to interest a teenager in a law career. Our sympathies are with the latter.

The Secret Footballer: Access All Areas by anonymous, Guardian Faber Publishing, £12.99 (ebook £4.20)

WHO is The Secret Footballer? It is a question to which a website is dedicated, with suggestions aplenty. Whoever the former Premier League player behind the pseudonym is, their ability to lift the lid on the game makes for fascinating reading. The author takes you through the murky backwaters of football, making some uncomfortable claims in this open, cutting and, at times, crude book. His opinion of the country's top clubs is as funny as it is interesting, while some of the subjects he shines a light on are important if uncomfortable.

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Oxfordshire Listings

Events

THURSDAY

Challenge of Russia: Morris Room, Corner House, Charlbury. Sir John Birch, former ambassador to Hungary and the United Nations, will give a talk entitled The Challenge of Russia: What is Putin up to? for West Oxfordshire United Nations Association. AGM 7.30pm, talks at 8pm.

Christmas gift fair: Vale & Downland Museum, 19 Church Street, Wantage. Local craftspeople have a display of handmade articles, including ceramics, paintings, textiles, prints, jewellery, bags and cards. Until January 9. Museum closed Sundays and from December 24 to January 3 inclusive.

Ramblers' walk: Meet at the church, Lewknor, for a six-mile walk to Adwell, Wheatfield and South Weston. 10am. Walk unsuitable for dogs. 01844 215624.

FRIDAY

Shopping extravaganza: Sibford School, Sibford Ferris. Christmas gifts, handmade jewellery, crafts, homewares, cakes, jams, cards plus order real Christmas trees and festive meats. There will also be children's games and Father Christmas will be in attendance. 2.50pm. £2 includes a hot drink and mince pie. Children get free entry.

Christmas fair: Witney Community Primary School, Hailey Road, Witney. Organised by the school's Friends group, with stalls for all the family including Santa's grotto, crafts, licensed bar, trade stalls, games and raffle. 3.15pm. Free entry. 07753 126619.

Christmas fair: School hall, Dark Lane, Sunningwell. Chance to buy Christmas gifts at Sunningwell Pre-school's event. There will be stalls, refreshments, games and prizes. 7-9pm. Anyone wanting to set up a stall is asked to pay £15 per table and contribute a raffle prize. Email info@sunningwellpreschool.org.uk

SATURDAY

Prize bingo: Village Hall, Main Street, Grove. Raffle with lots of prizes and refreshments. Proceeds to local charities and individuals. 7.30pm. 01865 820366.

Pub quiz: The Plough, High Street, Sutton Courtenay. £5 per team of up to five players. Winning team takes all. 8.30pm. 01235 848801.

Coffee morning: Ex-Servicemen's Club, Sheep Street, Bicester. Coffee morning in aid of Marie Curie charity. To include sale of charity Christmas cards, handmade jewellery, and handmade birthday cards and raffle. 10am.

Party night: Wootton & Dry Sandford Community Centre, Lamborough Hill, Wootton. This fundraising event for the centre, a registered charity, will feature singer and entertainer Garry Dorsey. Tickets £15 to include buffet. Bring your own drinks and glasses. Doors open at 7.30pm, show runs from 8.30-11.30pm. 01235 532816.

Charity collection: Castle Quay Shopping Centre, Castle Street, Banbury. The Terrence Higgins Trust will be raising awareness and fundraising ahead of World Aids Day on December 1. 11am. 01865 243389.

Silver jewellery workshop: The Mix Community Centre, Mill Street, Wantage. All resources and equipment provided. 10am. £25 per person. 07805 842192.

SATURDAY

Craft and gift fair: Carterton Community Centre, Marigold Square, Shilton Park, Carterton. More than 30 stalls selling beautiful and handcrafted items and other Christmas gift ideas. 10am-4pm. Free admission. The cafe will be open.

Christmas market: St Mary Magdalene Church, Park Street, Woodstock. More than 40 artisan stands inside and outside the church selling seasonal foods, gifts, crafts. There will also be a programme of entertainment. 10am. Free entry. 01993 772278.

Fairtrade event: St Ethelwold's House, East St Helen Street, Abingdon. Ethical gifts on sale, plus cake and coffee by a log fire. 10am. Free entry. 01235 555486.

Christmas market: Village Centre, Kennington Road, Kennington. Range of stalls selling crafts, cakes, jams, books, jewellery, china and glass, games and much more. 10am. Free entry.

Christmas fair: St Swithun's Church, Main Street, Merton. Christmas cards, decorations, nearly new items, books will be on sale, plus there will be a lucky dip, raffle, competitions, mulled wine and mince pies. 11am. Free. 01865 331429.

Table-top sale: Village Hall, Main Street, East Challow. Variety of items for sale at this Christmas shopping event, organised by East Challow WI. There will be refreshments and a raffle. Santa will be making an appearance. 12-4pm. Free entry. 01235 762421.

Christmas fair: St Michael and All Angels Church, Witney Lane, Leafield. Browne craft and gift stalls while enjoying mulled wine, tea, coffee and homemade cakes, and listening to carols. There will also be a raffle and seasonal activities for the children. 2pm. If you are interested in having a craft stall, contact Judith Cattermole on 01993 878707 or email jcatter@aol.com

SUNDAY

Christmas market: Village Hall, Bridge Road, Ickford. An afternoon of Christmas shopping with high-quality crafts, wares, festive gifts and gourmet treats, plus a pop-up cafe and Santa's grotto. 2.5pm. Free entry. 07779 585169.

Vintage fair: The Beacon, Portway, Wantage. Vintage and retro jewellery, clothing, homeware, vintage plus upcycled furniture. 10am-4pm. Entry £15, under 18s free.

Second Lease walks: Choice of 7.5-mile route taking in Faringdon and Littleworth or a four-mile walk around Standlake. For both walks, meet at Woodford Way car park, Witney, at 9.30am. See www.wospweb.com/site/second-lease or call 01993 774500.

Ramblers' walk: 11-mile walk to explore the area made famous by *Lark Rise to Candleford*. Meet by the school at The Green, Fringford. Bring a picnic. 10am. 01869 249128.

TUESDAY

History talk: Memorial Hall, Park Road, North Leigh. Dr Gillian White will talk about Mary Queen of Scots. Refreshments. 7.30pm. £4 visitors, members free. 01993 882301.

WEDNESDAY

Great War aviation: The Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum, Park Street,

To get an event of any kind listed here, enter the details into our easy-to-use online database at thisisoxfordshire.co.uk/events

Please add your event no later than ten days before the day of publication.

Woodstock. Peter Dye, former director general of RAF Museum in Hendon, will give a talk about the aviators and technological advancements during the First World War. It coincides with the museum's ongoing exhibition entitled *Above the Dreaming Spires: Oxfordshire's Great War Aviation Story*. 7pm. £10. 01993 810211.

Blenheim walk: A 5.75-mile fieldpaths walk within Blenheim Park, including a short distance on minor roads. Meet at Combe Lodge Gate, Blenheim Park, ref SP428158, at 10am. Use vergeside parking nearby. Bring refreshments for en route break. There is a pub in Combe on the return. Assistance dogs only. 01865 553800.

Comedy

SATURDAY

Martin Daniels: Corn Exchange, Market Place, Wallingford. Show by the comedian, entertainer, magician and presenter, who is son of Paul Daniels. 7.30pm. £10. 01491 825000.

Film

THURSDAY

Frank (15): Abingdon Health and Wellbeing Centre, Audlett Drive, Abingdon. Story based on the papier-mâché character Frank Sidebottom, former front man of Oh Blimey Big Band. Screening organised by Abingdon College & District Film Society. 7.45pm. £6. 01235 521976.

Theatre

THURSDAY

The Emperor's New Clothes: Village Hall, Draycott Road, Kingston Bagpuize. Kingston Bagpuize Drama Group is presenting a family show to entertain old and young alike. There will be a bar and refreshments. Performances on Thursday and Friday at 7.30pm, Saturday at 1.30pm and 5.30pm. £8.50, children £5.50, family tickets £25 in advance from 01865 821812 or www.wegottickets.com

FRIDAY

Variety show: Village Hall, Main Street, East Challow. Jigsaw Stage Productions is touring Oxfordshire villages with its *Big Variety Show*, which takes a peek at the four seasons in song, dance and sketches. It is joined by dancers from The Karen Brind School of Dance. Tickets available at Vale and Downland Museum or Buzz Cafe in Wantage, or on the door. 7.30pm. £7. 01235 767509.

SATURDAY

Variety show: Village Hall, Hobbyhorse Lane, Sutton Courtenay. Jigsaw Stage Productions stages its *Big Variety Show*. 7.30pm. See above for details.

Disco Pigs: Cornerstone Arts Centre, 25 Station Road, Didcot. Born seconds apart, Darren and Sinead, aka Pig and Runt, live in a fantasy world of their own, where trash TV, disco beats and cheap booze have fuelled this obsessive

friendship. But as they go for their 17th birthday binge, reality violently collides with their fantasy and their world begins to crumble. Adult content so age guide is for ages 14 and over. 8pm. £15, concessions £13.50. 01235 515144.

Talent show: Memorial Hall, Charlbury. Charlbury Community Centre Appeal is hosting another variety show, featuring some of the talent in the area. There will be up to 20 short slots and a wide variety of performers. 7.30-10.30pm. £10, including pizza. Tickets on sale in Charlbury Post Office.

SUNDAY

The Wizard of Oz: Cogges Manor Farm, Church Lane, Witney. Join Dorothy and her friends down the Yellow Brick Road, through cornfields and munchkin lands as she finds the three best friends that anyone could wish for, in M&M Theatrical Productions' version of L Frank Baum's classic tale. Refreshments available to buy. Performances at 1pm and 3pm. £10, children £8.50. 01993 772602.

Up in the Attic: Cornerstone Arts Centre, 25 Station Road, Didcot. Join three children on an unforgettable bedtime adventure through the attic at the top of an old house as they discover the delights and secrets hidden inside. This is a magical, melodic and interactive tale created through enchanting music and puppetry. 2pm. £8, concessions £6. 01235 515144.

WEDNESDAY

Noises Off: King Alfred's Academy theatre, Portway, Wantage. AmEgos Theatre performs Michael Frayn's farce about a play that descends into a shambles. 7.30pm. Until Saturday. Tickets: £8 Wednesday, £10 Thursday and Friday, and £12 Saturday from Umami Deli in Wantage and Hare in the Woods Deli in Faringdon or wegottickets.com

Music

THURSDAY

Orpheus in the Underworld: Witney Congregational Church, Welch Way, Witney. Kennington and District United Church Choirs will perform a concert version of Offenbach's work. 7.30pm. Free. Collection for Christian Aid. 01865 735885.

FRIDAY

Orpheus in the Underworld: Christ Church, Northcourt Road, Abingdon. See details above. 7.30pm. Free. Collection for a local charity, to be confirmed. 01865 735885.

Jason Pegg: Blue Boar, Goddards Lane, Chipping Norton. Covers old and new. 9pm. Free entry. 01608 643525.

From the Record Collection: Old Mill Hall, School Lane, Grove. Wantage Stage Musical Company presents a concert of song, amusement and nostalgia. It will feature group numbers, duets and solo performances of songs to suit any musical taste. 7.30pm. £9, concessions £7, group ticket £45 (online only). Tickets can be bought at Bretts Chemist, Grove; Rowes, Wantage; Xzanadu Hair, Stevenston; AL Vickery & Sons, Drayton; or wantagestagemusical.co.uk

SATURDAY

From The Record Collection: Village Hall, Drayton, near Abingdon. Wantage Stage Musical Company show. 7pm. See above for ticket details.

Amphion ensemble: St Michael's Church, Main Road, Stanton Harcourt. A charity concert featuring musicians from leading London and UK orchestras. Every penny from ticket and refreshment sales will go to Cancer Research UK. 7pm. £12, £8, £5 (under 18s).

Concert: Didcot Leisure Centre, Merelend Road, Didcot. St Birinus School choir, Didcot Festival Chorus and Oxford Symphony Orchestra perform Bach's *Christmas Oratorio (Part 1)* and extracts from Handel's *Messiah*. The soloists are Tara O'Connor (soprano), Quentin Hayes(bass) and ex-pupils Robin Jeffcoat Dick (tenor) and Phoebe Rayner (mezzo). The conductor is Andrew Walker. 7.30pm. Adults £8, concessions £6 and family ticket £24. 01235 814444.

The Turning Year: St James the Great Church, Hyde Road, Denchworth. The Mad Hatters group present an evening of traditional music, narration, prose and poetry on the theme of the changing seasons. Proceeds in aid of the church. 7.30pm. £10. 01235 868451.

SUNDAY

Winter family concert: St Edburg's Church, Church Street, Bicester. Get into the Christmas mood at Trinity Camerata's popular winter-themed concert. It will include a performance of Howard Blake's score for *The Snowman* animation film, with the amateur orchestra joined by actress Lynn Farleigh as narrator. Other pieces will include Prokofiev's *Troika*, from *Lieutenant Kije*, Vivaldi's *Winter*, from *The Four Seasons*, and Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite No. 1*. Children are welcome to come dressed as snowmen and join the snowflake hunt in the interval. 3.45pm. Adults £10, under 16s free. Tickets on door or from Coles Bookstore or Bicester Toys.

TUESDAY

Rock choir: Emmanuel Church, Barberry Place, Bicester. Launton Rock Choir will sing at this event in aid of Victim Support. There will be a raffle and refreshments during the interval. Doors open at 7.30pm for 8pm start. Adults £5, children £2. 01869 326447.

Singing for fun: The Methodist Church, Bridge Street, Bampton. Enjoy singing a large range of songs just for fun in an informal setting. Words provided. 8pm. £3. 01993 702561

Dance

FRIDAY

Barn dance: Village Hall, Church Road, Chinnor. Bodger's Wood Band, plus ploughman's supper. Bar. Proceeds to Chinnor Methodist Church Building Fund. 7.30-10.30pm. Tickets £7.50 (£2.50 under 18s) available from Jane Honeyball (01844 351096) or Liz Thorpe (01844 351565).

Country and western event: Carterton Social Centre, Brownes Lane. Dancing to the trio Black Steel at the Country Music Club event. 8.30pm. £6. 01993 850682.

CakeSport

banburycake.co.uk/sport



Darius Browne opened the scoring in Banbury's 2-0 victory

Puritans just keep winning

Browne and Gunn make it five on the spin

DARIUS Browne and Andy Gunn scored in the last 15 minutes to hand Banbury United a 2-0 win over Wimborne Town and stretch their winning run to five games.

The victory keeps the Puritans fifth in Evo-Stik Southern League Division 1 South & West, having only lost twice this campaign.

Mike Ford's side created the better chances, with Zac McEachran and Mark Bell going close, before Duran Martin hit the bar.

And they thought they

had broken the deadlock on 32 minutes, only for Leam Howards effort to be disallowed for offside.

The Puritans continued to push in the second half with Bell firing wide, before goalkeeper Jack Harding was called into action to deny Carl Preston.

But Banbury finally scored when Brown fired home on 75 minutes after top-scorer Ricky Johnson was denied by Wimborne stopper Jason Harvell.

And Gunn rose highest to head home on 81 minutes to seal victory.

Banbury Utd: Harding, White, Steedman, Martin, Westbrook, Gunn, Bell (Browne 66), Nash, Johnson, Howards (Blackstock 89), McEachran (Stanbridge 85). Subs not used: Joyce, Wise.

Attendance: 247
EVO-STIK SOUTHERN LEAGUE
Division 1 South & West

	P	V	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cinderford Tn	17	12	4	1	32	10	40	
North Leigh	17	11	3	3	39	14	36	
Winchester City	16	10	4	2	45	19	34	
Tiverton Tn	18	9	7	2	26	14	34	
Banbury Utd	17	9	6	2	39	18	33	
Bishops Cleeve	18	8	6	4	27	26	30	
Swindon Sup	16	9	2	5	25	17	29	
Shortwood Utd	17	9	0	8	27	27	27	
Evesham Utd	16	7	4	5	27	16	25	
Taunton Tn	14	7	4	3	23	14	25	
Larkhall Ath	17	6	6	5	29	25	24	
Yate Tn	19	6	5	8	25	24	23	
Slimbridge	19	6	5	8	21	24	23	
Didcot Tn	14	6	3	5	28	23	21	
AFC Totton	18	6	2	10	30	38	20	
Mangotsfield Utd	16	5	4	7	28	33	19	
Marlow	15	5	2	8	26	29	17	
Burnham	19	4	3	12	22	43	15	
Wantage Tn	18	4	2	12	26	33	14	
Wimborne Tn	16	4	2	10	32	40	14	
Bridgewater Tn	16	4	2	10	17	34	14	
Bashley	17	0	0	17	6	79	0	

Bulls enjoy nine-try fest to stay top

LEADERS Banbury scored nine tries as they eased to a commanding 55-12 win over Leamington in Midlands 2 West (South) at Bodicote Park.

Tries from Josh Deegan, Joe Mills and Adam Walsh saw Bulls lead 17-0 at the break.

Captain Ed Phillips converted the latter.

Walsh crossed again in the second half, before Ian Isham scored a brilliant solo try.

Phillips was once again on hand to add the extras.

Sam Stoop, Will Goode, Alex Stevenson and Mills also touched down.

Stevenson took over the kicking duties and converted three of the scores.

Leamington dug deep and scored two tries of their own late on.

Banbury are without a match on Saturday and return to action on December 5 when they travel to Malvern.

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ARIES

Mar 21-Apr 19



LIBRA

Sep 23-Oct 22

You must try to think of how your actions are affecting your close ones, as I can see that many of you Aries have been acting without really thinking and, if you're not careful, it's going to come back on you. The written word can save you time and money on two important projects. Ring now to hear why it's worth putting money into the home.

0906 585 4360

TAURUS

Apr 20-May 20



SCORPIO

Oct 23-Nov 21

If you're relying on promises from friends, then think again. If you want a job done well this week, then do it yourself Scorpio. Someone wants to visit you to tell you something which will change the way you view a close one. Live and let live must be your motto though, especially with the dramas upcoming for you next month. Ring now for details.

0906 585 4361

GEMINI

May 21-Jun 20



SAGITTARIUS

Nov 22-Dec 21

You enter a more fulfilling period of your life where you no longer feel you have to answer to everyone. You feel ready to make your own decisions and to take the consequences. For those of you thinking of going into further education, this is a great month to do so. Ring now to hear why I'm so proud of your home progress in November.

0906 585 4362

CANCER

Jun 21-Jul 22



CAPRICORN

Dec 22-Jan 19

You are making more out of current problems than is necessary, or do you really need to shake up and organise your personal circle and issues? It seems that some fine tuning is needed Cancer and the sooner you're honest about what you want and need, the sooner you'll find out if loved ones can give it to you or not. Ring now for back up.

0906 585 4363

LEO

Jul 23-Aug 22



AQUARIUS

Jan 20-Feb 18

I know you think others have judged you, but they actually only have your best interests at heart, so try not to say things you'll come to regret. A more media orientated link is strong in your chart and could be where I see the extra funds in your near future coming from. Ring now to hear how you have friends in hidden places in business.

0906 585 4364

VIRGO

Aug 23-Sep 22



PISCES

Feb 19-Mar 20

Are you worrying about things which don't affect your long term future? I think so Pisces, and I think this has a lot to do with the fact that you've felt your day to day life has not been under your control. It can and will be if you use this week to sit down and talk to the person you've clashed with. Ring now so I can give you some tools to use.

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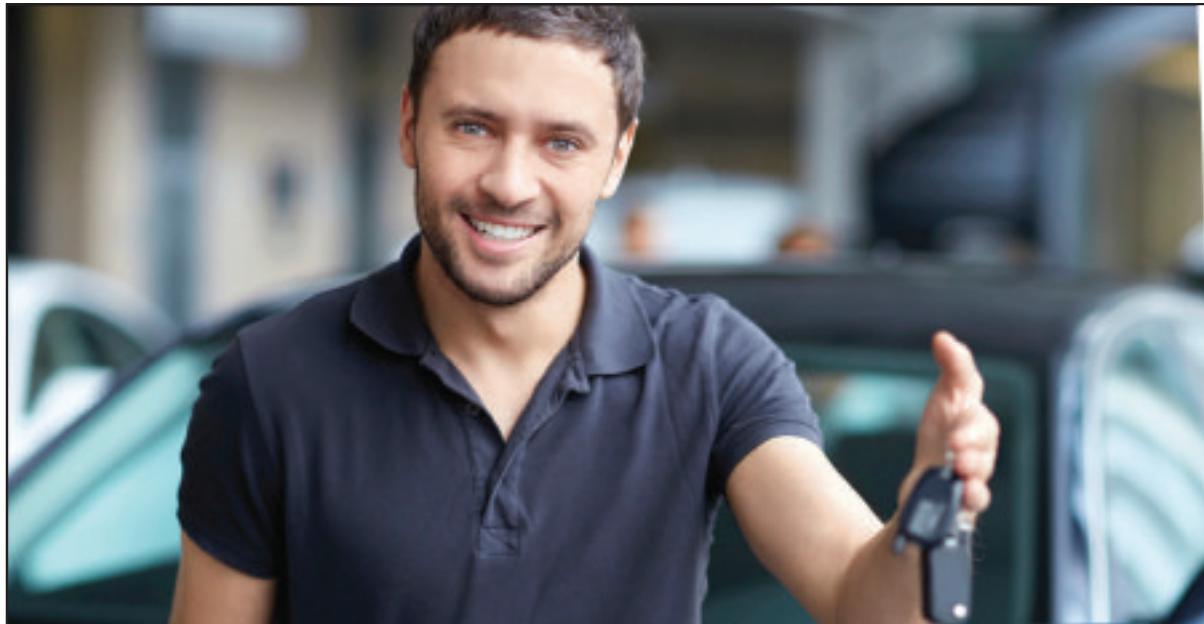
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In brief

■ SKODA UK has celebrated the end of its parent company's 120th anniversary year in style, bringing a group of heritage cars together, including a 1100 OHV Roadster that's one of only two in existence. The cars were gathered at Bicester Heritage, where journalists had the chance to drive everything from a 1929 442 four-door saloon to a 1992 Favorit with less than 2,500 miles on the clock. Newer models were also included, with the 2004 Octavia vRS. A 1977 110R showcased Skoda's motorsport intentions. One of only two left from an incredibly small build run, it is the jewel in the UK heritage fleet's crown. Last year the company sold more than a million cars globally for the first time.

■ ASTON Martin screened a documentary on the creation of the DB10 Bond Car at a drive-in cinema in the Great Court of Blenheim Palace. The event, for which everyone arrived in Aston Martins, went from the concept stages to after the filming of Spectre. Only 10 DB10 cars will ever be made. Created as a bespoke project for Bond, the DB10 is a fully working, high-performance supercar.

Auto facts

Model: Nissan Juke Nismo RS

Price: £21,995

Insurance group: 20E

Fuel consumption (Combined): 39.2mpg

Top speed: 137mph

Length: 416.5cm/164in

Width: 176.5cm/69.5in

Luggage capacity: 12.5 cu ft

Fuel tank capacity: 10.1 gallons/46 litres

CO2 emissions: 168g/km

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles

By David Duffy

david.duffy@nqo.com

THE evil twin of Nissan's crossover Juke has just got even edgier, with extra power and excitement along with the loss of a few degrees of economy and comfort.

You can spot the Nismo RS a mile off, thanks to its red wing mirrors and brake callipers, large exhaust pipe and motorsport-inspired styling.

The picture is completed with new LED daytime running lights set within the lower air intake grilles, and eye-catching, 18in alloy wheels.

A sharper chassis, stronger brakes and extra equipment help create a more extreme version of the Sunderland-built range's top-selling compact crossover.

Power from the turbocharged 1.6-litre engine rises to 218 horsepower, but on the test model a mechanical limited slip differential ensures the chassis can successfully transfer the extra torque to the road. A slip differential is not required in four-wheel-drive versions which have Nissan's Xtronic transmission with steering wheel-mounted paddle shifts to control the eight-speed manual mode.

An electronic system allows



The popular Juke's fiery twin, the Nismo RS, is fun but less comfy

glow sports gauges.

The two-wheel-drive test model has a 40 per cent increase in carrying capacity, thanks to reshaping of the luggage area, while two-stage floor and fold-flat rear seats make the load space flexible.

The Juke, which starts at about £14,000, has been a massive success, thanks to its day-to-day versatility, comfort and economy. But if you are determined to own a Nismo RS, go for one with Recaro sport bucket seats. They are functional, focused and fun, but a tad uncomfortable – which neatly sums up the car.

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Smart thinking on car wi-fi

Are gadgets diverting our attention?

WITH the launch of almost every car we see the march towards motors becoming an extension of the smartphone.

It is a rapidly growing area, as car firms seek to make their vehicles more compatible with devices that have become an essential item in our daily lives.

Yet, should we be embracing this technology leap or wondering if we really need it?

The benefits of turning your car into a mobile wi-fi hotspot are as varied as they are appealing.

You can access emails, the kids can stream music and video to keep them entertained, and it allows access to all the apps and

functions on your phone.

Vauxhall proudly points out the "fin" on the roof of its new Astra acts as a much stronger mobile aerial than the one in your phone.

There are undoubtedly safety advantages. If you are involved in a collision, systems such as E-call and Vauxhall's OnStar can contact the emergency services automatically.

However, with so many functions, apps and opportunities available through a smartphone, it is a huge temptation for motorists use of them when driving.

UK law says we are not allowed to use a handheld mobile phone when driving. We are allowed to

hold a cigarette, though, or a drink, and nobody has been prosecuted for plucking a sweet from the packet.

It is not the physical act that is distracting but the amount of mental power required to hold a conversation while driving.

If you add in the extra distractions of listening to email messages and texts, alongside choosing music and a satnav route, you have a raft of tasks that demand the driver's attention.

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